

MINUTES of MEETING of the MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chambers, Midlothian House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith on Tuesday, 20 January 2015 at 11.00 am.

Present:- Councillors Milligan (Chair), Baxter, Bennett, Montgomery, Muirhead, Russell, and Wallace.

In Attendance:- Councillor Bryant (Cabinet Portfolio-holder for Communities and Economy).

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Coventry, Imrie, Pottinger, de Vink and Young

1 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were intimated.

2 Minutes

The Minutes of Meetings of 25 November 2014 and 26 November 2014 (2 No.) were submitted and approved as correct records.

3 First Statutory 'Biodiversity Report' on Pursuance of Statutory Duty to Further the Conservation of Biodiversity

With reference to paragraph 6 of the Minutes of 25 November 2014, the Committee met with Councillor J Bryant (Cabinet Portfolio-holder for Communities and Economy), to discuss the report submitted to the Cabinet on 18 November 2014 by the Head of Communities and Economy, which had sought approval of the Council's first statutory 'biodiversity report', setting out action taken by the Council since 1 January 2012 in pursuance of its statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity. The report had been approved by the Cabinet.

Committee Members thereafter questioned Councillor Bryant on a number of issues referred to in the report.

Decision

- (a) To note that there were no specific proposals at present to reinstate the post of Biodiversity Officer but that as part of a service review following the appointment of a single Planning Manager , it was intended to ensure that sufficient biodiversity resource was in place and that positive consideration would be given to developing the generic skills of Planning Officers to enable them to address biodiversity issues; and

- (b) To note that a Service Level Agreement subsisted with The Wildlife Information Centre, the terms of which include the screening of planning applications to check for any biodiversity issues.

4 Scotland's Climate Change Declaration - 2013/14 Statement to Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

With reference to paragraph 7 of the Minutes of 25 November 2014, the Committee met with Councillor J Bryant (Cabinet Portfolio-holder for Communities and Economy), to discuss the report submitted to the Cabinet on 18 November 2014 by the Head of Communities and Economy which had sought approval of a statement on the Council's climate change actions during 2013/14. The statement had been approved by the Cabinet.

Committee Members thereafter questioned Councillor Bryant on a number of issues referred to in the report. In particular, Councillor Baxter highlighted, inter alia, the fact that the statement omitted any reference to the proposed opencast mining operations at Cauldhall Moor, Rosewell, which, whilst not having a direct impact on Midlothian's carbon emissions, could have an effect on the overall level of Scotland's carbon emissions arising from the use of the coal extracted in Scotland thus resulting in Scotland failing to meet its overall target in respect of carbon emission.

Decision

- (a) To note that carbon emission was only one element in determining the outcome of specific planning applications and that the Council needed to consider the terms of its development plan and any material considerations in determining an application;
- (b) To note that coal usage from imported coal increased the overall (global) carbon emission level; and
- (c) To receive information on the extent of the provision of solar panels within Council housing and the possibility of extending this provision to older properties.

(Action: (c) Head of Property and Facilities Management).

5 Inspection of Cornbank St James Primary School and Nursery Class

With reference to paragraph 5 of the Minutes of the Cabinet of 13 January 2015, there was submitted report, dated 13 January 2015, by the Director, Resources, incorporating a report, dated 12 December 2014, by the Head of Education, , outlining the outcome of an inspection carried out at Cornbank St. James Primary School and Nursery Class by the Education Scotland in October 2014, as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education.

The evaluations were as follows:-

Primary School

Improvements in Performance -	Good
Children's Experience -	Good
Meeting Learning Needs -	Good

Nursery Class

Improvements in Performance -	Good
Children's Experience -	Good
Meeting Learning Needs -	Good

Primary School/Nursery Class

The curriculum -	Good
Improvement through self evaluation -	Satisfactory

The inspection team had indicated that they were satisfied with the overall quality of provision and were confident that the school's self- evaluation processes were leading to improvements. As a result, they would make no further visits in connection with this inspection. Parents would be informed about the school's performance.

Decision

- (a) To note the content of the inspection report;
- (b) To congratulate the pupils, parents and staff connected with Cornbank St James Primary School and Nursery Class on the key strengths highlighted in the report;
- (c) To note that, whilst acknowledging the progress reflected in the report, the Council would continue to challenge, support and monitor the service in relation to achieving excellence through further improving performance; and
- (d) That where possible, future reports of this nature provide details of previous inspection reports for comparison purposes.

(Action: Director, Education, Communities and Economy).

The meeting terminated at 11.35 am.